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AUTHOR Fraser, Bruce
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses discourse markers (e.g., "and, so, anyway") and offers an overview of their characteristics and occurrence, using English for illustration. The role of discourse markers is to signal speaker comment on the current utterance. The discourse marker is not part of the sentence's propositional content. While absence of markers does not affect sentence grammaticality, it does remove a powerful clue about the speaker's perception of the relationship between prior and subsequent discourse. Each discourse marker may appear in a sentence-initial position; some may occur in sentence-medial or sentence-final position; however, in the latter cases, a change in marker scope occurs. Each discourse marker has an associated core meaning, part of which signals type of sequential relationship (e.g., change of topic, parallelism, etc.) and part of which provides the starting point for interpretation of the commentary message in a given case. Three types of discourse markers are examined: those signalling reference to the discourse topic; those signalling that current discourse activity relates to the foregoing discourse; and those signalling relationship of the basic current message to some prior message. Based on this conceptual framework, analysis of discourse markers in other languages in encouraged. (MSE)

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Discourse Markers Across Language

Bruce Fraser
Boston University

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Discourse Markers Across Language

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Introduction

When I talk about discourse markers I am referring to objects such as the underlined lexical items in the following examples:

(1) a) A: I like him. B: So, you think you'll ask him out then.
b) John can't go. And Mary can't go either.
c) A: Did you like it? B: Well, not really.
d) But when do you think he will really get here?
e) I think it will fly. Anyway, let's give it a chance.
f) Now, where were we?

Mentioned by Levinson (1983) only briefly, the first serious examination of this area of linguistics was carried out by Schiffrin (1987). Based upon her analysis of *and, because, but, I mean, now, oh, or, so, then, well,* and *y'know* as they occurred in unstructured interview conversations, she proposed that these markers typically serve three functions: i) they work as contextual coordinates for utterances by locating them on one or more planes of discourse; ii) they index adjacent utterances to the speaker, the hearer, or both; iii) they index the utterance to prior and/or subsequent discourse. She sees discourse markers as serving an integrative function in discourse, contributing to discourse coherence: they serve as a kind of *discourse glue*.

At about the same time, and apparently unaware of Schiffrin, Blakemore (1987) discussed the discourse markers *and, after all, you see, but, moreover, furthermore* and *so* under the label of "discourse connectives." Working from within the relevance framework proposed by Sperber & Wilson (1986), she proposed that these expressions are used to indicate how the relevance of one discourse segment is dependent on another: they are expressions which "impose constraints on relevance in virtue of the inferential connections they express." (141).

In Fraser (1990) I proposed an analysis of discourse markers as part of a grammar of the language, albeit as members of a pragmatic, not a syntactic, category. In my analysis, which drew on Schiffrin's work as well as analysis of other discourse, discourse markers are more narrowly defined than by Schiffrin.

Each marker has certain privileges of occurrence, and each has a core meaning signaling how the speaker intends the role of the utterance of which it is a part to relate to the prior discourse. Relationships signalled by discourse markers include a speaker intent to change the topic (e.g., *parenthetically, incidently*), to show a parallelism between the present message and part of the foregoing discourse (e.g., *and, similarly*), to reorient the hearer away from the present focus (e.g., *y'see, anyway*), to foretell a dissonance between the present message and some information in the foregoing discourse (e.g., *it could be, but, well*), and to claim a consequential relationship between the present message and the prior context (e.g., *thus, so*).

My purpose in the present paper is twofold. Primarily, I want to present an overview of discourse markers to show both what they are and what they are not. In addition, I want to explore the challenge of how we might go about examining the extent to which they function similarly across languages. I will use English as a basis for my discussion, both because I am familiar with it and because I have carried out research on English discourse markers. However, I have no reason to believe that English is either representative of the range of discourse markers in other languages or that it offers the researcher any special insight into this aspect of language.

Characterizing Discourse Markers

Following Fraser (1987, 1990, 1991a) I assume that sentence meaning is analyzable into two distinct types of encoded information: content meaning, and pragmatic meaning. Content meaning, sometimes referred to as the "propositional content" of the sentence, captures the state of affairs about which the speaker is talking. It is what the sentence is about. Pragmatic meaning, in contrast, provides signals of what different messages the speaker intends to convey through the direct, literal communication. It is signaled by both structural and lexical expressions. For each sentence, there are potentially three types of messages.

First, there is the basic message, always present, which is the message conveyed when the sentence is used in direct, literal communication.[1] For the basic message, the propositional content of the sentence serves as the message content, and the message type is signaled by basic pragmatic markers which may be syntactic structures or lexical expressions. The declarative structure, for example, is a basic pragmatic marker and signals that the speaker intends to convey his/her belief in the propositional content of the sentence. In contrast, the imperative structure, another basic pragmatic marker, signals the speaker

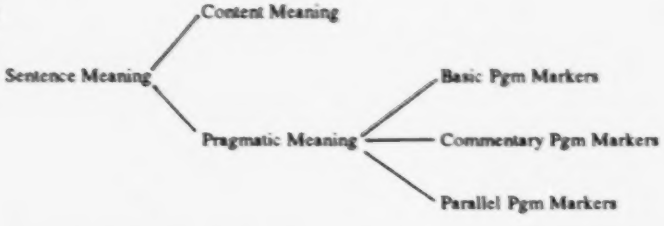
desires that the hearer bring about the state of the world referenced in the sentence content meaning. The lexical basic pragmatic marker *please* in imperative-initial position, as in "Please sit down," signals a request, while a performative expression such as *I promise* in "I promise to be there on time" signals the speaker's intent to convey a promise.

Second, there are commentary messages, signaled by commentary markers. These markers need not be present, but when they are, each signals an entire message--both force and content--which is separate from the basic message and which provides a comment on the basic message. In a sentence such as "Frankly, you are mistaken" the *frankly* functions as a commentary marker, and signals that the speaker recognizes that the message content following will be viewed unfavorably by the addressee. Similarly, in "Foolishly, John didn't check his e-mail" the *foolishly* signals the speaker's evaluation of the activity referenced in the basic message content.

And third, there are parallel messages. Here, also, these markers need not be present. When they are, each signals a message which is parallel to, but not a part of, the basic or any commentary message. In a sentence such as "He put his damned shoes on the table," the parallel marker *damned* signals that the speaker is angry, while in "Mom, where are my running shoes?" the *mom* signals that the speaker is addressing his mother.

The relationship between these aspects of sentence meaning is shown in the following figure:

(2)



Within this framework, discourse markers are one type of commentary pragmatic marker.

Consider the following interchange:

(3) **Attorney**: What happened then?
Witness: Alright, we got into an argument, I sort of lost my cool, and called him a jerk. You know how sometimes you just can't keep your temper...haven't you had that happen to you? I'm sorry about that, but it just happened.

Attorney: Anyway, so you called him a jerk. And then what did you do?

There are four discourse markers (underlined) in the above interchange, each of which signals a speaker comment on the current utterance, the utterance of which it is a part.[2]

The first marker, *alright*, signals that the utterance following is focusing on the topic at hand (here, the request for an account of what had occurred.[3] The second, *anyway*, signals a reorientation of the discourse focus (here, back to the witness' story), while the *so* signals that the following assertion is grounded on the foregoing (indeed, the witness asserted it). The initial *and* of the final utterance signals that what follows is to be heard as parallel to some part of the foregoing discourse (here, the initial question.)[4]

Within this general framework, I now want to look more closely at discourse markers. First, like all commentary markers, a discourse marker does not participate as a part of the propositional content of the sentence. It is detachable and may be deleted without changing the content meaning or the grammaticality of the sentence. This can be seen by removing the discourse markers from the examples in (1) and (3) and noticing that the content meaning is not altered. Note that this detachability is not permitted in the second sentence in the pair of the examples in (4), in which the underlined form is not a discourse marker:[5]

(4) a) $\underline{\text{Now}}_{\text{DM}}$, where are we? / [looking at map] $\underline{\text{Now}}_{\text{ADV}}$ where are we?
b) $\underline{\text{However}}_{\text{DM}}$, you can do it / [answer] $\underline{\text{However}}_{\text{ADV}}$ you can do it
c) $\underline{\text{Well}}_{\text{DM}}$, is how I feel important? / $\underline{\text{Well}}_{\text{ADV}}$ is how I feel

While, the absence of the discourse marker does not affect the grammaticality of a sentence, it does remove a powerful clue about what commitment the speaker makes regarding the relationship between the basic message conveyed by the present utterance and the prior discourse. For example, the presence of *alright* in (3), signals that the witness' intention is to focus on the request to recount the event, information that might be less readily recognized were the discourse marker absent.[6]

Second, discourse markers are not simply schizophrenic adverbs, sometimes functioning as an adverbs, other times as a discourse marker. One argument

against this analysis rests with the fact that discourse markers are drawn from areas of the traditional grammatical inventory other than adverbs, and include a few which seem unique:

(5) a) Verbs (*look, listen, say*)
b) Adverbs (*anyway, now, then*)
c) Literal phrases (*to repeat, as a result*)
d) Idioms (*by and large, still and all*)
e) Interjections (*well*)
f) Coordinate conjunctions (*and, but, or*)
g) Subordinate conjunctions (*however, so*)
h) Other (*ok*)

Moreover, even if one were to argue that discourse markers are simply their correlative lexical counterparts being used pragmatically (whatever that might mean), this proves untenable. The meaning of a marker is often significantly different from the meaning of the expression when used as an adverb or verb, not to mention the use as idioms. For example, the temporal meaning of *now* is only suggested in the interpretation of this form as a discourse marker in "Now, where should we go from here?" And, the verbal meaning of *look* is only remotely related to the interpretation of this form in "Look, I don't like what is going on here." Rather than attempt to account for the meaning of discourse markers as a function of the meaning of their corresponding traditional form, they must be treated as belonging to the pragmatic category of discourse markers.

A third aspect of discourse markers involves their privileges of occurrence. Like other commentary markers, each discourse marker may occur in sentence initial position, but some may also occur in sentence-medial position, and a few may occur in sentence final position. This pattern of distribution follows from the fact that a discourse marker not only signals a commentary message but, at the same time, signals the scope of this message.[7] The scope of the commentary message is usually the basic message conveyed by the sentence of which the discourse marker is a part. Thus, just as forms such as *even* and *only* are usually placed immediately prior to the material within their scope, so a discourse marker is generally placed prior to the material in its domain.

In those cases where the discourse marker is other than in the sentence-initial position, we find a change in marker scope. Consider the following examples:

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(6) I'm willing to ask the Dean to do it.

i) However, you know he won't agree.
ii) You, however, know that he won't agree.
iii) You know, however, that he won't agree.
iv) You know that he won't agree, however.

Although the *however* is functioning as a contrastive discourse marker in each example, its position determines the scope of the commentary message. In (6i) the speaker signals that there is something problematic about the message that follows in relation to the foregoing message. In (6ii), however, the speaker is taking only the addressee to be within the scope of the comment, while in (6iii), it is the speaker's knowing, and in (6iv) it is the failure to agree that is being contrasted.[8]

Finally, each discourse marker has a "core" meaning associated with it. There are two points here. First, part of the core meaning is to signal type of sequential relationship (change of topic, parallelism, consequence, contrast) between the current basic message and the prior context. This is quite different from providing a description of how two propositions are related. For example, in a sentence such as (7a), where the *so* functions

(7) a) John was sick. So_{DM}, don't expect him
b) John was sick, so_{SCJ} he went to bed

as a discourse marker, it signals a consequent relationship, namely, that the subsequent advice not to expect John is grounded on the earlier claim that John was sick. In contrast, in (7b), where *so* functions as a subordinate conjunction, there is a single message with a compound propositional content: a claim that John was sick and because of this he went to bed. It is not that the meaning of *so* is radically different in the two cases; it is not. Rather, in the discourse marker case, the *so* is relating two separate messages, while in the subordinate conjunction case, it is relating two propositions within the same message. This is the quintessential nature of discourse markers.

Second, the core meaning only provides the starting point for the interpretation of the commentary message in a given case. Consider the following examples.

(8) a) Susan is married. So, she is no longer single.
b) John was tired. So he left early.
c) Attorney: And how long were you part of the crew?

Witness: Five years.
Atty: So you were employed by G for roughly 5 years?

d) Son: My clothes are still wet.
Mother: So put the drier on for 30 minutes more.

e) Teenage son: The Celtics have an important game today.
Disinterested parent: So?

f) [Grandmother to granddaughter] So tell me about this wonderful young man you're seeing.

While the core meaning of *so* remains the same in each example--that the basic message bears a consequential relationship to the foregoing--these examples reveal that *so* as a discourse marker permits a wide range of interpretations. It is the task of the hearer to enrich this core meaning in light of the details of the particular discourse context.[9]

I now wish to turn to what discourse markers are not. First, in spite of their independence from the sentence proper, discourse markers are not single word sentences, even though some can be found standing alone as a complete utterance. Two examples will illustrate:

(9) a) **Mother**: There is no way you're going to watch TV.
Child: But...
Mother: Sorry, but that's the way it is.

b) **Faculty Member 1**: I heard there isn't going to be a salary increase next year.
Faculty Member 2: So?

In (9a), a non-falling intonation on the Child's utterance makes it clear that she was not finished.[10] In (9b) a question intonation has the effect of imposing an interrogative gloss on the core meaning of "What follows is...", thereby creating the interpretation "What follows?"

In contrast, (10) contains interjections: lexical formatives which stand alone and represent an entire message, usually reflecting the speaker's emotional state.

(10) a) **Father**: The Celtics lost tonight.
Son: Oh! Wow!

b) Ouch!

c) **Teenager 1**: I just talked to Madonna.
Teenager 2: Far out!

In (10a) there are two interjections. The first, *oh*, has the basic interpretation of "What I understand you to be saying is new information to me." Of course this interjection, like others, has imposed upon it a marked intonation which, in itself, provides an additional parallel message. In this instance, it was a utterance-final rising intonation which signals surprise. "Wow!" also stands for an entire message, roughly "I am pleased at this information," while "Ouch!" conveys "That hurts," and "Far out!" conveys "I'm pleased." Interjections differ significantly from discourse markers and do not signal a comment on the current utterance. Indeed, they are not even pragmatic markers but are pragmatic idioms and may always stand alone.

Vocatives, nominals used to refer to the addressee (e.g.., *Colonel, Waiter, Doctor, Everyone, Ahem, Sweetie*), must also be distinguished from discourse markers. Like interjections, they encode an entire message, to the effect: "I am addressing my remarks to _____." They seldom stand alone but are associated with an utterance and, as such, are one type of parallel pragmatic marker.

There are other candidate discourse markers. I only mention a few here. *Because* is one. Consider the examples in (11).

(11) a) **Wife**: Why do you want to go there?
Husband: Because I like the ice cream.
b) John must be at home, because his car is there.

In (11a), *because* is functioning as a subordinate conjunction, albeit in an utterance in which the main clause of the sentence has been elided *(I want to go because I like the ice cream)*. In (11b), *because* is functioning as a commentary pragmatic marker, but not as a discourse marker--it does not relate two messages, the one in the current utterance to some prior part of the discourse. Rather, like *inasmuch as, in view of the fact that, since, according to what I hear*, and *based on my observations that*, it signals the basis for which the speaker is expressing belief in the basic sentence proposition. It is a member of a different type of commentary markers.[11]

Excluded also from discourse markers is *Y'know*, a type of parallel marker. Consider (7):

(12) a) Y'know, I really like eating raw pickles.
b) John is, y'know, more of a friend than a lover.

In (12a), *Y'know*--not to be confused with the literal *you know*--does not signal a comment on how the current utterance is related to the foregoing. Rather, it signals a message requesting that the hearer appreciate and/or be in sympathy

with the speaker's point of view. In this role, it is a parallel marker like *come on* and not a discourse marker.

Finally, excluded are pause markers, illustrated in (13).[12]

(13) a) Coach: How many can you take in your car?
Parent: Well...at least 6 if they squeeze.
b) There were..oh...maybe half a dozen left when I arrived.
c) Ah...John...uh...could you come over here for a moment?

While in some cases these pause markers are homophonous with discourse markers or other pragmatic markers, their interpretation in (13) makes it clear that they are not signalling a sequential discourse relationship. Rather, they signal a message that the speaker wishes to keep the "conversational floor," perhaps because of the need to think before answering. Pause markers are members of a type of parallel pragmatic markers.

To summarize, discourse markers are lexical expressions. Each marker has a core meaning, and through that core meaning, it is independent of the basic sentence structure. It signals a sequential relationship of a specific sort between the basic message conveyed by the utterance of which it is a part and some earlier message. I now wish to examine the distinctions within this category.

Types of Discourse Markers

At the most general level, a discourse marker signals one of three types of comments: either that the current basic message to which the comment applies involves the discourse topic in some way; or that the comment involves the type of discourse activity currently underway (e.g., explaining or clarifying); or that it involves some specific relationship to the foregoing discourse (e.g., that it is parallel to, or contrasts with). I will briefly examine each of these three types in turn.

Type 1: Discourse Topic Markers

The notion of "topic" is, at best, problematic. Some researchers write of sentence topic, others of utterance topic, while still others explore the notion of discourse topic. Some researchers wisely avoid the topic altogether. I will consider only discourse topic: what the discourse participants are "talking about" at any given time, including various subtopics as they arise.[13]

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Some topic markers signal a different discourse topic (an initial topic, a previous topic) while others signal the reemphasis on the current topic. Included in this first group are the markers listed in (14):[14]

(14) *à propos X, back to my original point, before I forget, by the way, continuing, in any case, in case you don't recall, incidentally, just to update you, listen, moving right along, on a different note, parenthetically, say, speaking of, that reminds me, to continue, to return to my original point, turning now to, while I think of it, while I have you, with regards to*

Obviously, there are other means to introduce a discourse topic, such as an indirect suggestion, "How do you think you have been performing, Jack," or by announcing "I would like to talk to you today about your recent performance, Jack," or "Let's begin with a discussion about your recent performance."

The second group of topic markers signals a refocusing on or the emphasis on part of the topic at hand. These are listed in (15):

(15) *again, alright, but, here, indeed, in fact, listen, look (here), now, OK, say, see, well, y'see*

We find these in examples such as the following:

(16) a) Alright, let's get this thing organized.
b) Indeed, he is a good-looking guy.
c) Y'see, we really don't have enough money at this time.

Although most of these markers seem to belong in either one group or another, some markers, such as *listen*, and *say*, serve both the introducing and refocusing function.

Type 2: Discourse Activity Markers

The second class consists of discourse markers which signal the current discourse activity relative to some part of the foregoing discourse. These activities refer to types of discourse work such as explaining or summarizing, and not to the type of message (e.g., a claim or a promise) the speaker conveys through the utterance. I have identified 7 such activity types--surely not a complete list--and presented some representative examples in (17), with each type labeled by a term suggesting the discourse work being done.

(17) a) **Clarifying**: *by way of clarification, to clarify*
b) **Conceding**: *admittedly, after all, all in all, all the same, anyhow, anyway, at any rate, besides, for all that, in any case/event, of course, still and all*
c) **Explaining**: *by way of explanation, if I may explain, to explain*
d) **Interrupting**: *if I may interrupt, to interrupt, not to interrupt*
e) **Repeating**: *at the risk of repeating myself, once again, to repeat*
f) **Sequencing**: *finally, first, in the first place, lastly, next, on the one/other hand, second, to begin, to conclude, to continue, to start with*
g) **Summarizing**: *in general, in summary, overall, so far, summarizing, summing up, thus far, to sum up, at this point*

The ways in which these markers are used is self-evident, and I therefore omit sentence examples.

Type 3: Message Relationship Markers

The third class of discourse markers are those which signal the relationship of the basic message being conveyed by the current utterance to some prior message. There are four groups: Parallel; Contrasting; Elaborative; and Inferential.

Parallel markers are the most general of these and signal that the current basic message is, in some way, parallel to some aspect of the prior discourse. I have listed examples in (18):

(18) **Parallel Discourse Markers**: *also, alternatively, analogously, and, by the same token, correspondingly, equally, likewise, or, otherwise, similarly, too*

To see how these function, consider the examples in (14):

(19) a) **Student 1**: How was the party?
Student 2: Fantastic. Harold came. And who do you think he brought?
b) **A**: John is sleeping in the den and I'm in the kitchen
B: And where am I sleeping?

In (19a), *and* functions as a discourse marker, signaling that the second message is parallel to but separate from the first. The speaker has signalled that she is conveying two messages: the first, a claim that Harold came; and the second, a (rhetorical) question involving Harold's companion. Similarly, in (19b), the discourse marker *and*, uttered by the second speaker, signals a message parallel to the first two, in the sense here that this latter bit of information is needed. This use of *and* as a discourse marker is separate and distinct from its use as a coordinate conjunction, within the sentence propositional syntax, in cases such as "Oil and water don't mix" or "Reagan was asleep and no one would wake him."

Each of the other parallel discourse markers signals some qualification on the nature of the parallel relationship. I can tentatively identify two subgroups. The first contains *alternatively, or* and *otherwise*, which signal an alternate to an earlier message. The second subgroup contains *also, analogously, by the same token, correspondingly, equally, likewise, similarly,* and *too*, which signal a message similar along some unspecified dimension, with *also* and *too* signaling an identity of a part of the current message to one preceding.

Contrastive markers, listed in (20), populate the second group.[15]

(20) **Contrastive Discourse Markers**: *all the same, but, contrariwise, conversely, despite, however, I may be wrong but, in spite of, in comparison, in contrast, instead, never/nonetheless, notwithstanding, on the one/other hand, on the contrary, otherwise, rather, regardless, still, that said, though, well, yet*)

Here, similar to the parallel markers, there seems to be a single, more basic contrastive marker: *but*. Just as *and* signals that there is some sort of parallelism at hand, *but* signals a sense of "dissonance." The examples in (16) reflect some of the contexts in which the discourse marker *but* is found.[16]

(21) a) **Son** (whining): I can't do it.
Father: But I know that you CAN do it.
b) **Job Interviewer**: The position has been filled. But do come in anyway and talk for a minute.
c) **Witness**: I didn't think I should talk about it.
Attorney: But what did you actually say?

There are several subgroups which specify a more detailed sense of contrast. Markers such as *contrariwise, conversely, in comparison, in contrast, on the contrary* and *on the one/other hand* signal explicitly that, from the speaker's

viewpoint, the content of the two messages is in sharp contrast. Another subgroup, containing the markers *all the same, despite, however, in spite of, instead, irrespective, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, rather, regardless, still, though,* and *yet*, signals a sharp but unexpected contrast. A third subgroup of contrastive markers contains *I may be wrong but* and *that said*, which signal a contrast between a previous claim or like message (by either the speaker or another discourse participant) and the claim in the current message. Finally, *well* appears to be the sole member of a fourth subgroup, signalling that the current message is contrary to that which the hearer is presumed to expect.

Elaborative markers populate the third group. These markers signal that the current utterance constitutes an elaboration of an earlier one. Included in this group are the following:

(22) **Elaborative Discourse Markers**: *above all, also, besides, better, for example, for instance, further(more), in addition, in fact, in other words, in particular, indeed, more accurately, more importantly, more precisely, more specifically, more to the point, moreover, namely, on top of it all, that is, to cap it all off, what is more*

Of these, the markers *above all, indeed, in fact, on top of it all,* and *to top it all off* signal a more general sense of elaboration, (e.g., "He was fairly scared. Indeed, he was scared silly"), while a second subgroup containing *better, in particular, more accurately, more importantly, more precisely, more specifically, more to the point* has just the opposite effect, namely, to signal a more refined characterization of the sense of the foregoing. A third subgroup containing *also, besides, further(more), in addition, moreover, what is more* signals one additional aspect to the current topic (e.g., I don't think we should go due to the danger. Besides, I don't want to go.") A final subgroup signals the speaker's intention to have the current message signal an illustration of an earlier point. Such markers include *for example, for instance, in other words, namely*.

The fourth and final group is **Inferential Markers**, which signal that the current utterance conveys a message which is, in some sense, consequential to some aspect of the foregoing. Examples are presented in (22):

(22) **Inferential Discourse Markers**: *accordingly, as a consequence, as a result, consequently, hence, in this/that case, of course, so, then, therefore, thus*

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Contrary to the other three groups, there is no obvious subgrouping, although there are subtle differences. For example:

(23) a) John is remaining. So (?in that case) I am leaving.
b) I don't want to talk with you. But I will. Therefore (?as a result) sit down

The Challenge

In the foregoing I have laid out a framework of sentence meaning within which I have identified discourse markers as a type of commentary pragmatic marker. While there is no a priori reason to assume that discourse markers can be found in every language (although one wonders what would serve as "discourse glue" in their stead), I feel confident in asserting that these are as ubiquitous as nouns and verbs. I base this not on any universalist intuitions I might have, but on the research of two groups of graduate students during the past few years in examining discourse markers in their own languages. These included Arabic, Bulgarian, French, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, and Spanish. Moreover, their research confirmed my hope that each of these languages has discourse markers which are separate from the propositional content of the sentence, are detachable, and have a core meaning. It also confirmed my suspicions that one cannot expect to do research in this area to any degree of subtlety unless the researcher is a native speaker of the language being examined and the data is naturally occurring discourse.

But this is just the starting point. A more detailed comparison requires that the "other" language--I'll call it L--be analyzed in at least as much detail as we now have for English. This means a native speaker of the language must develop an emic analysis based on naturally occurring discourse in terms meaningful to native speakers of the language.

Let us assume that we have such an emic analysis of L along the lines of the English analysis that now exists, and that we do not contest the quality of the analysis. We still cannot consider a comparison, since the terms of analysis in each case--English and L--are language-specific. For example, in English there is a set of contrastive discourse markers (e.g. *but, conversely, however, in contrast, rather, still, yet*). But there is no a priori reason to assume that L will have a similar set of markers, all of which signal the same sort of contrastiveness that we find in English. What needs to be done (as is the case for all comparative work) is to develop an etic framework within which the concepts for all languages can be accounted for, much as has been done in

contemporary phonology. Only then will it be possible to make a meaningful comparison of English and L in the area of discourse markers.

Developing this etic framework in a pragmatic area is no mean feat as anyone who has attempted it will attest. It is, however, necessary if we are to make progress in understanding how languages compare in pragmatic areas and, more practically, if we are to inform language teaching materials with accurate information about the use of discourse markers in the new language.

NOTES

[1] More accurately, associated with every sentence is the potential for it being used to convey a basic message, based on the propositional content of the sentence and certain pragmatic markers. Whether the speaker is successful depends on whether the hearer recognizes the intended message.

[2] As far as I can tell, a commentary marker signals a message relevant to only the basic message, never to an indirect message.

[3] For the sake of exposition, I am assigning an interpretation to the discourse markers here and below. The points to be made should survive whether or not readers have slightly different glosses.

[4] In some cases, the discourse to which the marker signals a relationship may be in the distant past. For example, a student initiated a conversation with me not long ago with "*So*, when are you going to Italy?" The *so* in her utterance referenced our conversation of some two weeks earlier. For a detailed examination of *so*. see Fraser 1991b.

[5] In most but not all cases, the discourse marker is set off phonologically by a brief pause (an orthographic comma). This, as well as the intonation on the reminder of the sentence, usually serves to distinguish which role forms such as *now*, *however*, and *well* play in a given sentence.

[6] Commentary markers, other than discourse markers, cannot be absent from the sentence without a loss of meaning. For example, the presence of *frankly* in "*Frankly*, you didn't do very well in the exam" signals a speaker comment, which cannot be inferred when *frankly* is not present.

[7] I am using scope here in the same sense in which a quantifier is said to have a scope.

[8] This is similar to how the scope of *even* changes as a function of its location.

[9] This process is analogous to what occurs when one interprets *good* in "a good meal" versus "a good movie" versus "a good boy," or when one interprets *just* in "just now" versus "just behind the barn" versus "just right."

[10] The reader is referred to (Barton, 1990) on the issue of elliptical sentences.

[11] There is also the utterance "Because!" in response to "Why aren't you cleaning up your room?" which appears to have become a fixed form, perhaps shortened from "because I don't want to." In any event, it is not a discourse marker.

[12] Some of these pause markers appear to function as a kind of "start-up" form, signalling that the speaker is taking time to think about the answer or at least not responding too quickly, perhaps out of deference to the hearer.

[13] English focus markers (e.g., emphatic stress, a WH word, the lexical material in the scope of *even*), which signal the part of the utterance the speaker wishes to make most salient to the hearer, are different from topic markers and are a type of parallel pragmatic marker in this framework.

[14] The lists of discourse markers in the following discussion are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. In some cases, a marker belongs in more than one group but has not been included for clarity of exposition.

[15] The expression *on the one hand* is the one exception I have found of a discourse marker which signals that the current message is related not to a prior one but one forthcoming.

[16] For a detailed examination of *but*, see Bell, 1991.

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